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PORTE ST. DENIS.

IN the days of Louis XIV., François Blondel, the architect, was at the height of his fame. He was employed in the construction of some of the noblest national monuments, and his name thus became associated with many of those buildings, which have since been rendered remarkable by the struggles, the battles, the triumphs, and defeats, which have from time

beautifully arranged, and harmonises well with the rest of the building. The architect knew that ornament must always be subsidiary to the grand effect of the whole, and that convenience must as much as possible be attended to in all public works. He had studied the antique—the column of Trajan, the obelisks of Egypt, the ruins of classic Rome—and



VIEW OF PORTE ST. DENIS, IN PARIS.

to time occurred in the good city of Paris. Among other public works, François Blondel began and finished the Porte St. Denis. This was, perhaps, his greatest work, at all events it was one on which he prided himself; in it he seemed to have out-Blondelled Blondel, and says, in his own account thereof, that it is the grandest work of the kind to be found in the whole world.

It is sixty-two feet high and proportionately wide, with an opening of twenty-four feet in the middle. This is very

he had the happy art of skilfully adapting all that was most calculated to improve the effect of his own design.

With this intention he placed two pyramids at the sides of the opening, so as to flank the arch; these he placed upon massive pedestals, resembling that of the column of Trajan, which, while they answered a very useful purpose as posterns for foot-passengers, gave much grace and elegance to the pyramids. They were ornamented with various figures and devices, all emblematical of the glory of the grand monarch.

The Porte St. Denis was intended to be a sort of sculptured history of that eventful time, a record of all the wonderful victories, chiefly on the ocean, of that most wonderful king. "But," says the architect, "the rapidity of the conquests of the sovereign in his Dutch campaign, and the famous passage of the Rhine, which occurred in the year in which the Porte St. Denis was commenced, obliged us to adopt other arrangements, and Messieurs the provosts made up their minds to decorate the arch after another fashion, following the king by land through his mightiest battles and most glorious victories. The noblest arch of triumph could not do honour sufficient to those noble triumphs." The entablature represents the passage of the Rhine, and the pyramids are covered with emblematic figures, after the manner of the medals which were struck, and the arches which were erected, to do honour to Augustus after his conquest of Egypt, and to Titus after the conquest of Judea. Blondel describes every particular with amazing accuracy, and dilates with no ordinary satisfaction on the appropriateness of each device. The sculptures are indeed justly celebrated, and the whole of them possess great merit. They were executed by Givardon and Michael Anquier; the bas-reliefs which decorate the pedestals of the pyramids are in composition and in execution very remarkable. They were evidently designed, as the architect candidly owns, in imitation of the sculptures on the column of Trajan.

The Porte St. Denis has been the scene of many a fierce struggle. It was once the glory of kings, and showed on its beautiful frontage the triumph of the old regime, but since its architect has slept his last sleep, since Louis Quatorze and his marshals have passed away, since the Revolution has swept away the old regime, many sanguinary fights have happened at the Porte St. Denis, and it has attained another, and a far different description of celebrity than that which it was intended to possess, when sculptors carved in the stone-work—LUDOVICO MAGNO.

THE MUSICIAN OF AUGSBURG.

THERE lived, at some former time, in the city of Augsburg, a musician whose name was Nieser. There was no kind of musical instrument that he could not fashion with his own hands, nor was there any upon which he could not perform indifferently well. He was also a composer; and, although none of his compositions are now extant, tradition informs us that his reputation in that, as well as in the other departments of the art, not only filled the city, but extended throughout the whole circle of Suabia. Other causes contributed to swell his fame: he possessed great wealth—acquired, it was sometimes whispered, not in the most creditable way; and the only inheritor of it was a daughter, whose beauty and innocence might well have been deemed dowry sufficient, without the prospective charms of her father's possessions. Esther was indeed almost as celebrated for the softness of her blue eyes, and the sweetness of her smile, and her many kind actions, as old Nieser was for his wealth, and the excellence of his stringed instruments, and the paucity of his good deeds.

Now, in spite of the wealth of old Nieser, and the respect which it had obtained for him, and the musical celebrity which he enjoyed, one sore grievance pressed heavily upon him. Esther, his only child, the sole representative of a long line of musicians, could scarcely distinguish one tune from another; and it was a source of melancholy anticipation to Nieser, that he should leave behind him no heir to that talent which he held in almost equal estimation with his riches. But, as Esther grew up, he began to take consolation in thinking that, if he could not be the father, he might live to be the grandsire, of a race of musicians. No sooner, therefore, was she of a marriageable age, than he formed the singular resolution of bestowing her, with a dowry of two hundred thousand florins, upon whomsoever should compose the best sonata, and perform the principal part in it. This determination he immediately published throughout the city, appointing a day for the competition; and he was heard to affirm, with a great

oath, that he would keep his promise, though the sonata should be composed by the demon, and played by the fiend's own fingers. Some say this was spoken jocularly; but it would have been better for old Nieser had he never spoken it at all it is certain, however, that he was a wicked old man, and no respecter of religion.

No sooner was the determination of Nieser the musician known in Augsburg, than the whole city was in a ferment. Many who had never dared to raise their thoughts so high, now unexpectedly found themselves competitors for the hand of Esther; for independently of Esther's charms and Nieser's florins, professional reputation was at stake; and where this was wanting, vanity supplied its place. In short, there was not a musician in Augsburg who was not urged, for one motive or another, to enter the lists for the prize of beauty. Morning, noon, and night, the streets of Augsburg were filled with melodious discord. From every open window proceeded the sound of embryo sonatas; nor was any other subject spoken of throughout the city than the approaching competition and its probable issue. A musical fever infected all ranks: the favourite airs were caught, and repeated, and played, and sung, in every house in Augsburg; the sentinels at the gates hummed sonatas as they paced to and fro; the shopkeepers sat among their wares singing favourite movements; and customers as they entered took up the air, forgetful of their business, and sang duets across the counter. It is even said that the priests murmured allegrettos as they left the confessional; and that two bars of a presto movement were found upon the back of one of the bishop's homilies.

But, amidst all this commotion, there was one who shared not in the general excitation. This was Franz Gortlingen, who, with little more musical talent than Esther, possessed one of the best hearts and handsomest persons in Suabia. Franz loved the daughter of the musician; and she on her part, would rather at any time have heard her own name, with some endearing word prefixed to it, whispered by Franz, than listened to the finest sonata that ever was composed between the Rhine and the Oder. Nieser's decree was therefore of sad import to both Esther and Franz.

It was now the day next to that upon which the event was to be decided, and Franz had taken no step towards the accomplishment of his wishes: and how was it possible that he should? He never composed a bar of music in his life: to play a simple air on the harpsicord exhausted all the talent he was master of. Late in the evening Franz walked out of his lodgings, and descended into the street. The shops were all shut, and the streets were entirely deserted; but lights were still visible in some of the open windows; and from these came sadly upon the ear of Gortlingen the sound of instruments in preparation for the event which was to deprive him of Esther. Sometimes he stopped and listened, and he could see the faces of the musicians lighted up with pleasure at the success of their endeavours, and in anticipation of their triumph.

Gortlingen walked on and on, until at length he found himself in a part of the city which, although he had lived in Augsburg all his life, he never recollected to have seen before. Behind him the sounds of music had all died away, before him was heard the low rush of the river, and mingled with it there came at times upon the ear faint tones of wondrous melody. One solitary and far distant glimmer showed that the reign of sleep was not yet universal; and Gortlingen conjectured, from the direction of the sound, that some anxious musician was still at his task, in preparation for the morrow. Gortlingen went onwards, and as he drew nearer to the light, such glorious bursts of harmony swelled upon the air, that, all unskilled as he was in music, the tones had a spell in them which more and more awakened his curiosity as to who might be their author. Quickly and noiselessly he went forward until he reached the open window whence the sound proceeded. Within, an old man sat at a harpsichord, with a manuscript before him: his back was turned towards the window, but an antique and tarnished mirror showed to Gortlingen the face and gestures of the musician.